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Message Text

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15
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 DLOS-04 OFA-01 SAL-01 CG-00 DOTE-00

/093 W
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R 052050Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4395
INFO USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0782

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FA, UK, AR
SUBJECT: THE SHACKLETON INCIDENT

REF: USUN 0423

1. MOST OF LOCAL PRESS GIVES PROMINENT THOUGH NOT SENSATIONAL COVERAGE TO INCIDENT IN WHICH ARGENTINE DESTROYER ALMIRANTE STORNI ATTEMPTED TO BOARD ROYAL RESEARCH SHIP SHACKLETON BY FIRING SHOT ACROSS BOW (DEPARTMENT HAS DETAILS VIA FBIS). DESPITE FAIRLY STRAIGHT-FORWARD COVERAGE, INCIDENT WILL DOUBT-LESS LEAD TO FURTHER EXTRAVAGANT NATIONALIST STATEMENTS BY POLITICAL FIGURES SEEKING TO CAPITALIZE ON INCIDENT FOR PER-SONAL GAIN AND INDEED WILL TOUCH A SENSITIVE NERVE WITH MOST ARGENTINES FOR WHOM MALVINAS QUESTION IS AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE.

2. CONTACTS AT BRITISH EMBASSY REPORTING THAT ENTIRE MATTER HAS AN "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" QUALITY TO IT. UPON HEARING OF INCIDENT, HMG INSTRUCTED EMBASSY HERE TO DELIVER PROTEST NOTE (RELEVANT PORTIONS CONTAINED IN REFTEL). CHARGE CARRIED NOTE IMMEDIATELY TO FOREIGN MINISTER QUIJANO, WHO HAD HIS OWN NOTE OF PROTEST READY TO PRESENT UPON CHARGE'S ARRIVAL. TWO, IN CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFECT, THEN, EXCHANGED NOTES. BRITISH WERE SURPRISED BY GOA

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NOTE, AND, FEELING THE MORE AGGRIEVED PARTY, STRESSED
UNACCEPTABILITY OF ARGENTINES' TAKING HOSTILE ACTION AGAINST
HER MAJESTY'S SHIP ON OPEN SEAS. BRITISH EVEN MORE ASTOUNDED
WHEN QUIJANO STATED THAT GOA HOPED "INCIDENT" WOULD NOT PERTURB
"GENERAL STATE OF RELATIONS" BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES OR EVEN
GENERAL STATE OF MALVINAS ISSUE.

3. AT PRESENT HMG HAS NO OTHER VESSELS IN AREA WHICH COULD
PROVOKE FURTHER INCIDENTS AND BELIEVES GOA MAY ATTEMPT TO
DEFUSE MATTER BY CARRYING ON FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON SUBJECT IN
LONDON RATHER THAN IN BUENOS AIRES. MOST DISTURBING ELEMENT
TO BRITISH IS THEIR BELIEF, WHICH THEY MAINTAIN IS BASED ON
HARD INFORMATION, THAT DECISION TO INTERCEPT THE SHACKLETON
WAS MADE AT "HIGHEST LEVELS OF ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT."

4. COMMENT: IF, AS BRITISH EMBASSY HERE MAINTAINS, DECISION
TO PROVOKE INCIDENT MADE AT HIGHEST LEVELS GOA, IT COULD INDICATE
THAT A FLOUNDERING GOVERNMENT HAS NOW CHOSEN TO SEIZE ON THIS
EXPLOSIVE NATIONALIST ISSUE TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM ITS ALMOST
TOTAL FAILURES IN DOMESTIC ARENA. IF THIS THE CASE, HOPES THAT
MATTER CAN BE DEFUSED THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS NOT PROMISING.
HILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
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Draft Date: 05 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: GS
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